



SUPERMINIS

HONDA JAZZ

£8,457 to £12,657



TOYOTA YARIS

£7,642 to £12,672



TOYOTA YARIS VERSO

£10,272 to £12,172



Of all our Best Buy superminis, it's the Jazz that offers the most enjoyable drive. The engine is quiet yet responsive, the brakes and clutch well balanced; almost everything about the driving experience feels undemanding.

The same design and build quality are evident in the interior. Trims and fittings are solid, and there's room for five people to stretch out comfortably – no mean feat in such a small car. The boot is roomy, too, which gives it a definite advantage over most superminis.

Once you factor in the impressive security – always a boon in a city car – it easily stays a Best Buy for the third year running. The only thing to worry about is ride quality; take it out for a long test drive to see what you think. The suspension is a little stiff for some, but there are still plenty of reasons to fall in love with the Jazz.

OUR CHOICE	1.4i-DSE SE £10,357
USED CHOICE	1.4i-DSE SE (2002) £7,325

The Yaris is a winning combination of quality styling and Toyota's commitment to reliability. It's a brilliantly designed car that's hard to beat: a Best Buy for the fifth year in a row, even in the face of stiff new competition.

A glance at its main competitors shows why. Popular superminis like the Nissan Micra, Ford Fiesta and Vauxhall Corsa simply can't match the all-round appeal – from the thoughtful control positions to the pleasant steering and high level of comfort. It even has one over on our other Best Buys – the quiet diesel model offers a smoother ride than either the Yaris Verso or the Jazz.

The two things to check before you buy are boot space, which is miserly, and rear visibility when parking. If you think either will bother you, try comparing those two factors on the Honda Jazz or the Ford Fusion.

OUR CHOICE	1.4D-4D T3 5-door (diesel) £9,962
USED CHOICE	1.4D-4D GLS 5-dr (diesel) (2002) £6,425

The Yaris Verso is the most liked car in our survey – a remarkable 92 per cent of owners would recommend the Verso to friends searching for a new set of wheels.

It combines the strengths of a supermini with those of a small MPV to overcome many of the space problems of its little brother, the hatchback Yaris. But there's more to the Verso than space: it's reliable, drives well and is easy to park. Add the quiet and fairly economical engine, and it glides into its third year as a Best Buy.

It's less than stylish, and it could do more to protect belongings inside the car from theft (both these issues are addressed better by the Honda Jazz). The ride is a little bumpy, too, but that's not enough to put off the vast majority of owners. They'll be as unhappy as us to see the Yaris Verso go – Toyota is about to start phasing it out.

OUR CHOICE	1.4D-4D T Spirit 5-door (diesel) £11,982
USED CHOICE	1.3 GS (2002) £5,800

WORTH CONSIDERING



FORD FUSION

£10,082 to £14,447

The Fusion is a strong all-rounder that's more likely to suit a budding family than its better-known but smaller brother, the Fiesta.

It has plenty of leg- and headroom in the back, and the boot is easy to load. Safety and security levels are pretty good. And it's a cheap car to maintain – replacement parts and service costs are low.

The Fusion's overriding problem is that it feels unrefined compared with our Best Buys – and, indeed, the Mini. Owners talk of an uninspiring and noisy drive, and there's a distinct lack of enthusiasm for its aesthetic appeal.



MINI

£10,617 to £19,947

Perhaps not as iconic as its predecessor just yet, but show the Mini a twisty road and it will show you its fun side. There's even the option of a convertible version – a rarity in the supermini class.

You can't fail to feel confident behind the wheel, even at speed; this is a highly enjoyable car to drive. It looks fantastic, the interior is classy, and it's one of the most secure cars in the supermini class.

In fact, the only reasons it isn't a Best Buy are the tight squeeze in the back and the titchy boot. If you travel light, though, this car is a superb choice.



SUZUKI WAGON R+

£7,903 to £8,678

Like the Best Buy Toyota Yaris Verso, the Wagon R+ is an attempt to cross a supermini with a small MPV. It makes a decent stab at it, too – at a much more competitive price than Toyota's effort.

Carrying large, awkward loads isn't a problem because the seats are particularly easy to fold down. And good visibility makes it easy to park.

However, dynamically, the Wagon R+ isn't on a par with its more expensive competitor: it can be noisy and its handling and stability at speed leave something to be desired.

USED-ONLY BEST BUYS

Standards have risen so much among small cars that there are no discontinued models good enough to be Best Buys.

If you're on a budget, go for a second-hand version of our Best Buy superminis. As a guide, our 'Used choice' shows a typical price for a three-year-old model.

DON'T BUYS



FIAT PUNTO

£7,452 to £12,097

Contrary to what Fiat's adverts say, there's not much spirit in the Punto.

It is spacious for a supermini but apart from that it falls well short of its competitors. The drive, not much fun to start with, is accompanied by rattles and squeaks – and the Punto is notorious for clutch problems.



CITROEN SAXO

May 96 to Feb 04
Up to £8,100

Gone but sadly not quite forgotten. Top of a long list of owners' complaints about the Saxo are the limited space inside and its constant gas guzzling.

They should also worry about its woeful level of crash protection. It is fairly reliable but that's not enough – don't go near it.



PEUGEOT 106

Sep 91 to Sep 03
Up to £7,375

The 106 is built on the same chassis as the Saxo, so it's no surprise it has poor safety design and a cramped cabin.

Owners dislike the brakes, steering, gear change and the listless engine, all of which make for a wholly unpleasant driving experience.